INTERNAL/EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET
(Worksheet may also be found in Appendix B of the FY08 SMART Planning Manual)

An **internal/external assessment** is a candid analysis and evaluation of internal and external data and factors to develop a clear sense of the agency's standing and what impact it will have on the agency and its mission. The process of conducting an assessment is often referred to as SWOT analysis because it involves a review of an organization's internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as its external opportunities and threats, which is often known as a "SWOT" analysis. However the internal/external assessment is more than a "SWOT" analysis.

Ideally, assessment is a team exercise and it should show an accurate picture of the agency.   It is typical that the SMART Planning Team as well as employees are involved in collecting and analyzing the data to enhance their understanding of the agency. Input should also be sought from other customers, stakeholders, board members and other individuals that have an interest in the agency.

It is important that all agencies include their board of directors, advisory boards, etc. in the SMART Planning Process regardless of their role or function for the agency. Their guidance, recommendations, and input are vital for successful planning to agencies in the state. Smaller agencies with few employees should especially use their boards and/or board members to participate in this team exercise to complete the assessment. They will bring valuable information to this part of the planning process.

> An internal/external assessment can easily turn into a "gripe" session. If this starts to happen, it can be turned around by asking those who are complaining to offer some realistic solutions to the problems they are identifying. Remind everyone that the purpose of this exercise is to find ways to build an agency's strengths as well as to identify ways to overcome weaknesses and problems.

Answering the following questions can complete the internal/external assessment:

   i.   Who are the agency's customers and stakeholders? What are their needs and expectations? _____
   ii.   What is the agency's past record? _____
   iii.   Where is the agency now? _____
   iv.   What opportunities for positive change exist? _____
   v.   What are the agency's strengths and weaknesses? _____
   vi.   What are the agency's external threats and opportunities? What are the most likely scenarios for the future? _____

i. Who are the agency's customers and stakeholders? What are their needs and expectations?

Customers are the primary intended recipients or beneficiaries of an agency's services, the group(s) of individuals whom the agency exists to serve. The products and services an agency provides directly impact them. They may be either internal or external to the agency. They are often referred to by different names (e.g. client, citizen, patient) depending on the type of service.

Stakeholders include individuals and organizations that have direct involvement, an investment or interest (that is, a stake) in the success or actions taken by an agency. Stakeholders do not necessarily use the products or services of an agency. They include clients, volunteers, managers, employees, partners, suppliers, board members, legislators, and the community.

To identify the customers, stakeholders and assess their needs and expectations, ask the following questions:

Who receives or benefits from the goods or services produced by the agency? _____
Who are the customers? _____
What do customers need from the agency? _____
What else do they want? _____
Who are the stakeholders? _____
What are their interests in the agency? _____
What results do they want from the agency? _____

The best way to find out what customers think is to <u>ask them.</u> A number of techniques can be used to get customer input. These include: customer surveys, focus groups, comment forms, interviews, personal visits, customer advisory committees and public meetings and hearings.

ii. What is the agency's past record?

What is the agency's track record? _____
What has the agency accomplished? _____
How well have the needs of the customers been met? _____
What changes have occurred that had a major impact on the agency? _____
Has the agency grown?_____
Have improvements been made? _____
If so, what improvements?_____
Has the agency remained the same or declined? _____
Why? _____

To determine the answer to the above question, review components/phases from the SMART Cycle, which includes the Plan, Budget Request, Operations Plan and Quarterly Performance Reports. Review these documents thoroughly and decide what has worked well and what has not. Were goals met in past years? If not, what happened in the process? Other documents useful in obtaining information to answer the question are annual reports, program evaluations, financial and performance audits, employee and customer surveys.

iii. Where is the agency now?

What are the agency's current programs and/or activities?_____
Does the existing agency structure make sense? _____
If not, what changes would benefit both the agency and its customers? _____
What progress is being made on the program and/or activity level? _____
What are the cost factors that the agency's operations will face?_____
How will the cost factors affect current planning? _____
What is being done well?_____
What is being done poorly? _____
Is the agency meeting its goals and performance standards?_____
What is the public perception of current programs and/or activities?_____
What do customers and stakeholders think about the agency in general?_____

A number of resources can be used to answer these questions. These include but are not limited to the following: input from board members, advisory councils, governing boards, interest or advocacy groups, management team, employees, customer surveys, and data from recent performance reports and components/phases of the SMART Cycle.

iv. What opportunities for positive change exist?

What remains to be accomplished? _____
How can the agency take advantage of opportunities? _____
Has the agency planned to accommodate change? _____
If so, how? _____

v. What are the agency's strengths and weaknesses?

What does the agency do well? _____
In what areas can it improve and how? _____

vi. What are the agency's external threats and opportunities?

What are the most critical elements of the external environment that affect the operations or the agency? _____
What barriers or constraints does it face? _____
How can the agency build on strengths and overcome its weaknesses?
_____
What are the most likely scenarios for the future?_____

The information gathered in this above section will serve as formal records and should be maintained by the SMART Planning Team. It will help define values, goals, formulate objectives, build strategies and select units of measure. Records may include surveys, data collected, and comments from customers and stakeholders. Not only will this information help facilitate and enhance the remainder of the SMART Planning process, but also it will serve as documents to refer to in next year's planning.

The final results of information revealed during the assessment are also valuable for implementing quality management efforts, developing budget request, conducting agency evaluations, and preparing for performance audits and reviews.